

OBITUARY

PETER NOEL CROW

Peter Crow was a lepidopterist of the old school. He had a wealth of field experience and was always willing to draw upon this in helping others. Despite promptings to put pen to paper, he published very little, preferring open discussion in which to state his often forthright views. For many years he held the view that the professional entomologist lacked the field expertise of the amateur, but in later years one sensed an easing of this stance.

Of stocky build and broad of shoulder, he was a fine sportsman and played hockey at county level; yet there were times when illness belied his apparent good health and he retired from the banking world in his middle years. His keen business sense was however still put to good purpose and for many years he served as treasurer to the *Entomologist's Record*, Lancashire and Cheshire Entomological Society, and the joint committee set up expressly for the protection of the large blue butterfly.

Born in Leicestershire he later lived in Berkshire and then Hertfordshire where he received much help from the late Dr C. B. Williams at Rothamsted. Having lived mainly in digs during his professional life Peter was much appreciative of the offer of temporary storage space for his cabinets at Rothamsted and, later, at Reading Museum where he also gave valuable help on the collections. Certain notable Diptera and Lepidoptera collected in Berkshire and now in the collections at Reading bear witness to Peter's industry for he had set up home in the town in 1967 before finally moving to North Wales to spend his last 19 years.

Those early Welsh years were possibly his happiest — a time when he walked the hills finding many new localities for *tullia* and *aurinea* and discovering *Eriozonea syrphoides* a syrphid new to Britain.

The final years at Dolafon were clouded by ill health when chronic osteoarthritis caused him much distress. However, even at these times he would still enjoy talking of days in the field — his delight at finding *plumigera* eggs in mid-winter — of nights down the Smugglers Cliffs for larvae of *cracca* — and of a particularly heavy night at Dungeness following which he nodded off and drove into the Royal Military Canal. Heedless of other items in the car he gave eternal thanks that his set of Buckler's 'Larvae', high on the back seat, were undamaged. "Remarkable" he would say with a twinkle, "because the car was full of fish!"

His wide ranging collections of Lepidoptera, Diptera and Hymenoptera have gone to Glasgow and Liverpool and bear witness of a dedicated, knowledgeable and friendly companion of the field.

B.R. BAKER

THE LATER YEARS

During the sixties Peter Crow acquired a small chalet-type bungalow, Dolafon, in the extensive grounds of what was later to become the Plas Tan-y-Bwlch study centre. Set back amongst the trees on a hillside overlooking Maentwrog, the river below, a small lake just over the hill behind, this proved an idyllic holiday home with an under-recorded insect fauna in the surrounding countryside to be investigated. He was very proud of his discovery of the handsome hoverfly *Eriozonea syrphoides* in August 1968 and published several notes on the species, but, regrettably, very little on his other captures locally.

After taking early retirement he moved permanently to Dolafon and made many

collecting trips to North Wales localities such as Harlech dunes, Cader Idris, or, further afield, to Newborough Warren. However, as the years went by the isolation of Tan-y-Bwlch proved to have its disadvantages. Most of the nearby bungalows were not occupied continuously and it must have been quite a lonely existence at times during the long winter months. Increasing ill-health and several operations on a painful knee joint were perhaps the cause of an irascibility which at times proved a strain on social relations.

I first knew Peter Crow as a member of the North Wales Naturalists' Trust and our common interest in insects was a point of contact during his time in North Wales. Some years before his death I spent an afternoon with him while he showed me his treasured specimens. Every beautifully set butterfly had a history and he remembered clearly the exact place and circumstance of its acquisition, who was with him and how long it took to capture. One of his worries as the years went by was what was to happen to his beloved collections and the topic was raised with several of us. Sadly, he never made a final decision and a nephew who works abroad and spends limited time in Britain was left with the problem of disposal. Fortunately he realized the importance of the main cabinets and the Diptera and Lepidoptera are now safely installed at the Liverpool and Glasgow Museums respectively. A small number of store boxes was put on one side locally but everything else ended up in two skips at the roadside! Inquisitive neighbours later raided these and, as a result, 66 boxes are now in my possession. An interesting sidelight on Peter's character then came to view — he was an enthusiastic frequenter of auction sales. As well as a variety of domestic bric-a-brac from crockery to bird-cages and small items of furniture, numerous boxes of Lepidoptera, British and foreign, had thus originated and still bear the lot numbers. Amongst the specimens can be seen the labels of A.E. Gardner, Tait, F. Smith, F.W. Sherman and others. But alas, many insects are without data of any kind and suffering from long neglect.

Entomologists are a rare species in North Wales and it is sad to see the number of this small group diminished. Peter Crow died in November 1987. He never married.

M. JOAN MORGAN

